

Pontoosuc Lake News

Volume 6, Issue 2

January 2006



Who to Call with Your Concerns About Pontoosuc Lake:

*Pittsfield:

Call your City Councilors

Lewis Markham (Ward 1)
443-5745.

Tony Maffuccio (Ward 7)
499-4633.

*Pittsfield Dept. of Public Works

Call 499-9314

with concerns about the weed
harvesting program

*Parks Dept. Call 499-9343

about the parks or beaches

*Lanesborough:

Call Paul Boudreau, 442-0965

Town Administrator

*Your legislators:

Sen. Andrea Nuciforo, 442-6810

Rep. Denis Guyer, 684-0033

Rep. Chris Speranzo, 447-7225

*The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake Board of Directors:

Lee Hauge, 442-6691.

Michele Rivers Murphy, 443-
7881.

Ron Tinkham, 448-8370.

Gordon Zaks, 499-4680.

Melissa Jette, 442-1521 ext. 22

Tim Coe, 448-5304.

John Hickey, 442-6713.

Dan Miraglia, 442-3568.

Carolyn Sibner, 445-4430.

Carole Siegel, 443-5445.

Change in Ownership of Pontoosuc Dam Pittsfield Will Regulate Lake Level

When Berkshire County Government was dissolved in 2000 all assets of the County, including Pontoosuc Lake, became the property of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Pontoosuc Lake Working Group, formed by the County Commissioners to develop a plan for Pontoosuc Lake without County government, recommended that the lake and the dam be owned by the Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

On July 1, 2000 it was decided ownership of all assets would be transferred to the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAM). The situation was thought to be temporary and a transition to DEM ownership was expected shortly.

In the five years since then, the DEM merged with another agency and was renamed the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

(Continued on page 4)

Historical Harmony The numerous names of Pontoosuc

Letter From the President

This newsletter is being sent to our mailing list of over 600 households who have an interest in the welfare of Pontoosuc Lake. Nearly 100 of these are active dues-paying members of the Friends of Pontoosuc.

We encourage those who are not members to join. We welcome comments from all of you. Phone numbers for all on the board of directors are listed on the left column of the first page.

2005 was a busy year for us. Some progress is being made, as you can see from the articles in this newsletter, yet much remains to be done. The Lake Management Plan published in December 2004 provides us the basis of our action planning.

Involving the youth of our community in lake activities has been a priority for us this year.

(Continued on page 2)

In the early 19th century Farmer Joe Keller was visited by a NYC gentleman that was so deeply impressed by the wide and level acres of snow covered terrain, he was prompted in no time, to buy the farm. It wasn't until the deed was written up that Keller confessed in summer, the land was a lake.

From then on, locals referred to the lake as "Joe Keller's Farm". Over the years Pontoosuc Lake has gone by multiple names with very different origins.

On July 6, 1902 the "Sunday Morning Call," an independent newspaper devoted to the interests of Berkshire County, carried a front page article entitled, "Shoonkeek, Moonkeek".

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Supporters of Pontoosuc Lake

Simon's Market
1654 North St., Pittsfield
DELI (Route 7) 448-6264

&
Lanesboro Getty
705 South Main St. (Route 7)
Lanesboro, MA

**If you are interested in advertising space in this
 newsletter please contact**

Michele Rivers Murphy, 443-7881.

Weed Remnants Reused

Over the years, recipients of this newsletter have read articles on the detrimental impacts traditional lawn fertilizers have on the lake.

Significant quantities of these high phosphate fertilizers run off lawns every time it rains; ultimately ending up in the lake where they nourish nuisance weeds.

Every summer for the past few years, harvesting crews have been removing over 150-truckloads of resulting weed residue out of Pontoosuc Lake. These weeds are then trucked by the Pittsfield DPW to the Rotti farm on Fort Hill Avenue in Pittsfield. The Rotti's in turn, compost these weeds into an innovative, prolific fertilizer.

If you want to do something to improve the health of your local environment; substitute compost from the Rotti's farm for high phosphate fertilizers. Compost is a natural fertilizer and healthier for you, your lawn and *your* Pontoosuc Lake.

**Contact Larry Rotti at:
 448-8627 (farm)**

Jack Hickey

Letter

(Continued from page 1)

This not only gets us the benefit of their volunteer hours, but will also develop in them a sincere interest and concern for the issues which impact the lake. We had heavy student participation in the watershed survey, the waterchestnut removal, the lake clean-up, and the refurbishment of the Pines Park picnic tables. We also supported an MCLA ecology class which conducted a lab on the lake this fall. Another activity where we have student help is this newsletter. Nicole Henry, a student at MCLA, has generously volunteered to edit this newsletter. We thank her for undertaking this difficult task.

We plan another issue of the newsletter in the late spring. Weed harvesting, vegetated buffers, watershed plan, dam repairs, a new bathhouse, beach upgrade, and the option for herbicide treatment of lake weeds will be discussed.

Use of herbicides to control our weed problem needs to be considered because it may be more cost effective and/or provide better control than harvesting. The article by Gordon Zaks in this newsletter summarizes the approach for Pontoosuc identified in our lake management plan.

We realize that this is a controversial subject and we plan to proceed using an open forum; providing opportunity for community input, information, advice and resources. We will hold a public meeting on herbicide use next summer to answer any questions and provide opportunity for input by all interested parties.

We held a successful fundraising raffle this year, a first for the Friends of Pontoosuc. We would like to thank Michele Murphy for her hard work and skill in seeing this project through. Hopefully next years will be even bigger! If anyone can help with the difficult task of selling tickets or have ideas about where we might be able to sell tickets to those with a real interest in the welfare of our lake, contact Michele.

Save Tuesday, May 16, 2006 for our annual meeting which will be held at the ITAM on the lake at 7:00.

If there are any questions or concerns about topics discussed in this newsletter, or if you are interested in volunteering or submitting an article, please contact us.

Lee Hauge

55 VOLUNTEERS CONDUCT WATERSHED SURVEY

We are in the process of developing a watershed management plan. As has been reported in previous newsletters, this effort is funded in part by a grant from the Massachusetts DEP. It is lead by Melissa Jette, of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The first step in developing this plan is to conduct a watershed survey; this is nearly complete.

The purposes of a watershed survey are to increase awareness, generate baseline data from field observations, determine priorities, and create and implement an Action Plan. This is vital for Pontoosuc Lake. We need to slow the rate of eutrophication. This rate is greatly accelerated by nutrient loading and sedimentation caused by human activity. The data taken over the past 20 years tells us that water clarity is degrading. Deep regions which lack enough oxygen to support fish are growing. If we don't reverse this trend, the lake will be unusable for recreation.

The Pontoosuc watershed is all the land where water drains into the lake, be it directly or through streams or brooks. To conduct the survey, the watershed was divided into 22 blocks, and volunteers were assigned to gather data in each block. We were lucky to recruit 55 volunteers for this important work: 14 MCLA students, 5 BCC students, 1 Mt. Greylock student, and 35 lake stakeholders. This turnout was very gratifying. It will provide the detailed and high quality data needed for an excellent result. An example of what was found in a typical survey is included on page 6 of this newsletter.

The survey gathering process has been completed on 20 of the 22 blocks. An action plan meeting was held at the Lanesborough Town hall on October 25, 2005. Results were reported and actions were identified and prioritized.

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Annual Clean-up Is Bigger and Better

Picnic Tables are Refurbished!



**Shaun Harris, an Eagle Scout Candidate,
paints picnic tables**

Friends of Pontoosuc Lake Watershed, Inc.'s Annual Pontoosuc Lake Clean-Up took place over a three day period on June 10, 11, and 12, 2005. Approximately 60 volunteers including the Sheriff's Community Service Crew, members of Friends of Pontoosuc and children in the lake neighborhood participated throughout the three day lake clean-up. Collectively volunteer participation equated to approximately 133 hours in time and service. 1,450 gallons of trash and 4-6 yards of brush and debris were collected and removed.

Bob McCluskey and several other volunteers repaired and painted several picnic tables. Later in the summer, Eagle Scout candidate, Shaun Harris developed a proposal to complete the project. Shaun removed and replaced several boards over a several week period. Shaun and other members from Scout Troop #8, Mount Carmel Parish then spent Labor Day week-end, sanding and painting all 31 picnic tables at the Park. In addition, Home Depot donated the lumber, Pittsfield Co-Op Bank donated \$200.00 for supplies and Passonno Paints provided all the needed paint brushes, paint and paint thinner. Shaun Harris is the son of David and Ann-Marie Harris of 54 New Hampshire Avenue, Pittsfield. We sincerely appreciate the great job he did completely overhauling the picnic tables!

A special thanks to all volunteers who made this past summer's annual lake clean-up so successful!

**Michele M. Rivers Murphy
Michele M. Rivers Murphy**

Ownership

(Continued from page 1)

An agreement has finally been reached between the DCAM and the DCR. The lake itself will continue to be owned by the DCAM, but the dam and spillways, gates, etc. will be transitioned to the DCR. The 2006 dam repair (discussed in another article in this newsletter) will be funded by the DCAM and managed by the DCR.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is being developed to identify lake management responsibilities. Parties to the MOA are: the DCR, the DCAM, the City of Pittsfield, and the Town of Lanesborough. The Friends of Pontoosuc has been an active participant in the development of this agreement. Highlights include:

- Current dam repairs funded by the DCAM and managed by the DCR
- All future required maintenance and repair of the dam will be funded and performed by the DCR
- Operation of the dam to control the lake level will be the responsibility of Pittsfield, with support from Lanesborough
- The weed harvesting program will continue to be conducted by Pittsfield, funded jointly by Pittsfield and Lanesborough.
- Activities to protect water quality and provide lake access will continue to be the responsibility of Pittsfield and Lanesborough

The Friends of Pontoosuc has been working for years to get the ownership issue resolved. The latest progress would not have been possible without the initiative and support of our legislative delegation: Sen. Andrea Nucciforo, Rep. Denis Guyer and Rep. Chris Speranzo. We thank them for their efforts on behalf of our lake. A special thanks to Denis Guyer who organized and chaired the meetings in Boston and Pittsfield, as well as lead the development of the MOA.

In closing, I believe that this action is good for our lake. Having DCR assume responsibility for the dam is the best possible outcome, as Pittsfield and Lanesborough do not have the resources to assume the burden. The DCR and other state agencies do have grants and other programs for all lakes in the State and we will continue to access those resources. Funding by DCAM for the immediate repairs is crucial to our use of the lake next season and beyond.

Lee Hauge



Mayor Ruberto Draws the winning Ticket

Raffle Generates Funds For Lake Initiatives

During the end of last year's FOPLW's Annual Meeting, **WBRK- AM Star, 101.7 FM Radio Travel Host, Stephanie Abrams** offered to donate a trip as a fund raising mechanism. The Friends took her up on her charitable offer and due to Stephanie's generosity, we were able to conduct a raffle that generated approximately \$1200 for FOPLW's lake management initiatives.

The **Grand Prize** was 4 nights/5 days accommodations in a three bedroom villa at the exclusive **Reunion Resort & Club in Orlando, FL**. At our November 17th monthly meeting, **Mayor James Ruberto** was kind enough to take time out his busy schedule and draw the raffle winners. Tim Rivers of Connecticut was the winner of the grand prize. The other thirteen prizes included pontoon rentals, rounds of golf and area lake restaurant certificates.

A special thanks to Stephanie Abrams and other area businesses for their donations as well as Pat Baczek from Massachusetts' Teachers Association for gratuitously creating and printing hundreds of raffle tickets! Overall, our first raffle was a learning experience. We will continue to explore opportunities to improve and increase our profitability! Thank you for the donations for FOPLW's Raffle!

Michele M. Rivers Murphy

Pontoosuc Has Friends at MCLA

Students research oxygen levels in lake

The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake met recently with the administration of Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts to discuss Pontoosuc's need for volunteer help with a watershed survey. At that meeting a collaborative was formed when a Science Professor expressed interest in conducting a "laboratory" for students in the environmental science courses.

On October 6th two pontoon-boat loads of students embarked for Pontoosuc's "deep hole" to measure, amongst other things, dissolved oxygen (DO) and temperature at 5-foot intervals. In doing so an interesting phenomenon developed. The first few readings showed the expected decline in DO with depth. However just above the thermocline, the DO reading increased by about 20% (from about 5mg/L to about 6mg/L)!

At first the "seasoned amateur testers" from Pontoosuc thought the students had made a mistake. Yet the second and third sets of readings came back the same. The matter was then referred to MCLA Professor Elena Traister and received was the following explanation:

- The phenomenon of a DO maximum in the metalimnion is called a positive heterograde dissolved oxygen curve. This can occur for (at least) two reasons.
- First, there is slow mixing in the metalimnion. Wind does not easily mix water that deep. This lack of mixing can result in a narrow band of water with a particularly high DO, due to light penetrating into the metalimnion.
- Secondly, phytoplankton can sink through the water column and become suspended on top of this dense, underlying water. Through photosynthesis, these suspended organisms give off oxygen, adding to the DO increase at the thermocline.

What we thought was a mistaken reading turned out to be a phenomenon we were unaware of.
Bottom line: collaboration pays off.

Jack Hickey

Dam Repairs Are Underway

Over the past few years moisture has been forming behind the stones of Pontoosuc's dam, freezing, and causing the stones to fall out. It is in need of emergency repairs. The dam is classified as high hazard because if it failed, it would most likely cause catastrophic damage and loss of life downstream in Pittsfield.

The Department of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) have agreed to rebuild Pontoosuc's dam. The estimated cost is \$700,000. A special thanks to Representatives Guyer, Speranzo and Senator Nuciforo for their successful hard work in networking this negotiation.

(Continued on page 6)



Elena Traister (far right) and MCLA students prepare for work on Pontoosuc Lake

Results of a Typical Watershed Survey

The goal of the recent survey on Pontoosuc Lake was to take a closer look at the watershed and identify any issues that call for further investigation or immediate action. Each volunteer team did their part by choosing a specific portion of the watershed, walking or driving the area, and noting conditions on the forms that were provided.

My team was one of several that took part in this important work. Our area went about one-half-mile south and east from the lake. The northern boundary was the Mall Road. This area included residences and commercial areas on Rt. 7, the residential area east of Rt. 7 and a large undeveloped area.

On one of our rare, rain-free October days we armed ourselves with the map of our assigned area, a notepad and pencil, binoculars, and a letter explaining our presence to any concerned citizens. We spent the afternoon exploring.

The main issues of our area surrounded the businesses on Rt. 7. Trash in the gutter and partially covering the catch basin grates was found. This debris, along with run-off is of main concern. Many businesses on Rt. 7 have large paved parking lots, some within ten-feet of the lake, with no vegetative buffer yet one of the lots did have a grate for drainage. In any case, this area is in need of further study. Recommendations as to how the lake and these businesses can co-exist will be highly beneficial for both.

The roads on the east side of Rt. 7 are steeply sloped with some erosion. They were mostly debris-free however, and the storm grates were in fairly good condition. The major concern for this area is future development of the open land. Proper precautions will be necessary to control construction debris when development occurs.

On a positive note, many of the lakefront residences had good buffers and the presence of boat rental businesses allows proper lake access to tourists and residents.

Our results were documented and added to those of the other teams. Developing an action plan around all of the findings has begun.

Susan Cetti

Repairs

(Continued from page 5)

A new five-foot reinforced concrete wall will be erected against the downstream side of the existing structure. This wall will be anchored into bedrock by 1½-inch steel rods 2 feet apart, and driven ten feet into the bedrock.

The top 4-feet of the dam will be removed, requiring a 5-foot drawdown this winter. It will be replaced with a new top to maintain the same lake level during recreational season. This new top will have a 3 ½-foot by 6-foot sluice gate that will be electronically operated; allowing for an additional discharge capacity.

Work will also be done to rehabilitate the 7-foot gate which currently controls the level of Pontoosuc. Additional repairs will need to be made to the raceway on the south side of Hancock Road.

The last new feature will be a weed boom projecting out from the south side of the channel to the new sluice gate. The weed boom is being installed to reduce the quantity of weed build up at the gate house trash screen. The operators are much appreciative of this addition.

A recommendation by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to install a fish screen will not be implemented unfortunately. This decision is due to the estimated additional cost of \$350,000-500,000 to the overall project.

Pontoosuc cannot be restored to its normal operating level until this work is completed. Construction was expected to start before Christmas and the contract calls for the work to be done in 120 days.

An extended period of cold weather could upset this very tight schedule, creating a situation where the runoff from the spring melt would be lost. In meetings with the state and engineering design firm, representatives of FOPLW have suggested that the top of the old dam not be removed until the new 5-foot thick wall is in place *and* that it is clear that there is ample time to complete the work within the very tight time schedule. As of late January there was no sign of construction activity. We have called attention to this concern of getting the lake refilled, to the Berkshire Legislative Delegation, Mayor Ruberto, and the Lanesborough Board of Selectmen.

Friends will continue to monitor this progress and once again thanks to Denis, Chris and Andy for all their help.

Jack Hickey

Herbicide Weed Control Plan Development and Options

Last year the Friends of Pontoosuc Lake and Watershed Corp. created a Lake Management Plan that included everything that is presently done to manage the lake and what should be considered in the future. Presently we are cutting the invasive weed species Eurasian Milfoil, (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), and Curlyleaf Pondweed, (*Potamogeton crispus*) twice during the summer months. The lake drawdown and the January raise/lower of about a foot have all been moderately successful over the past three years. We have been to several seminars over the last several years and the experts confirm that cutting Eurasian Milfoil has a disadvantage in that it leaves fragments of the weed in the lake.

This is how this invasive species propagates itself naturally. So even though cutting keeps it from growing to the surface and maturing for natural fragmenting, the fragments from the cutting also reseed the plant. The drawdown is very powerful because it freezes the roots and kills the whole plant and keeps the shore clear of Milfoil. The Curlyleaf Pondweed reseeds itself each year growing very fast and crowding out the native species.

Many experts in the field say the answer is to use herbicides to selectively control these invasive species. The Management Plan calls for a trial use of Herbicides in a selected area of the lake. We are talking with Lycott Environmental Inc. and GeoSyntec Consultants. Both are state approved to dispense the eight approved Herbicides and Algaecides described in the Generic Environmental Impact Report, (GEIR).

It is suggested that we use the herbicide Reward, (diquat dibromide), which will effectively manage these two plant species. The plant will begin to drop to the bottom within two weeks, and should be completely managed within three to four weeks. The herbicide will not adversely affect fish or non-target organisms. Several bodies of water have been successfully treated with Reward. Some of the lakes close by are Hoosac (Cheshire) Lake, Ashmere Lake, Plunkett Reservoir, and Richmond Pond.

The water use restrictions for Reward include three days for drinking and five days for irrigation, (direct water intakes). There are no water-use restrictions for swimming, fishing, or boating. It will be requested that recreational activities be curtailed while the area is being treated. It is expected that only one treatment will be required but sometimes a follow-up treatment is needed.

The plan is to work on obtaining the proper permitting from both Lanesborough and Pittsfield Conservation Committees, obtain a formal bid from the venders, and be ready to treat a trial area in the spring of 2007. The areas being considered are in front of Matt Reilly's and the northwest cove. Both of these areas have large amounts of the invasive plants.

The trial area will be monitored by doing macrophyte studies to document results. We estimate that a meaningful trial will cost at least \$8,000 dollars. If the trial is successful the entire lake could be treated for \$25,000 to \$30,000. Since the harvesting program cost \$52,000 there is the potential for a substantial cost saving along with better management. The drawdown and all other programs would remain in effect.

Gordon E. Zaks

Friends of Pontoosuc's Annual Meeting

May 16, 2006

Please join us at 7:00 p. m. at the ITAM Lodge

Agenda topics include alternative weed control options, results of the watershed survey, the Watershed Management Plan, the lake's water quality and weed harvesting programs, status of the beach improvements, and more. *(It's also a nice way to see your lake neighbors again after the long winter)*

Numerous Names

(Continued from page 1)

In its earliest days Pontoosuc Lake was called "Shoonkeek Moonkeek" translating to "haunt of the winter deer," after two Mohegan Indians of the area who, in the traditional manner of unhappy lovers, jumped off a cliff.

The article discussed the entrancing natural splendor of the lake, reflecting in its polished liquid surface the beautiful shrubbery and noble pines growing on the banks and at the base of the surrounding hills. This name however inevitably succumbed to the unimaginative dictum of white settlers. Considering the nearby plantation New Framingham, the lake itself was soon referred to as Framingham Pond. In 1765, this plantation on the north side of the lake became the town of Lanesborough and no one seemed to object when the adjoining lake was then referred to as Lanesborough Pond.

Sometime around 1767, with a greater regard for history than spelling, it was decided that the recently renamed Lanesborough Pond would be henceforth known as Pontoosuc Lake.

Jack Hickey

55 Volunteers

(Continued from page 3)

Melissa is compiling a summary of these results from forms filled out by the surveyors and is developing a preliminary action plan. These will be circulated to the participants for further input and refinement.

Luke Beverly, a student at Mt. Greylock High School has agreed to support the watershed planning process as his senior project. He will initially conduct the survey on the two parcels not yet done. He will then do follow-up activities for problems identified throughout the entire watershed. We welcome Luke's participation in this imperative work.

We plan to complete the watershed management plan by the middle of 2007.

Lee Hauge

Thank you for Supporting Pontoosuc Lake:

HOME DEPOT
555 Hubbard Avenue
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 445-9901

WAL-MART
555 Hubbard Avenue
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 442-1971

Thank you for Raffle Donations

Grand Prize: Reunion Resort & Club in Orlando
4 Nights/5 days 3 bedroom villa (for 8)

By: Radio (WBRK- AM Star, 101.7 FM)
Travel Host, Stephanie Abrams,

Other Prizes:

Pontoosuc Lake Country Club
U Drive Rent-A-Boat (Route 7)
Wild N-Wet Snow & Water (Route 7)

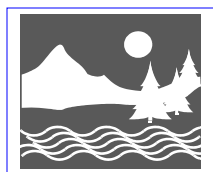
Restaurants:

Matt Reilly's On the Lake (Route 7)
Zucchini's (Route 7)



FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC LAKE

Gordon Zaks, Clerk
17 Narragansett Ave Rt 44
Pittsfield, MA 01201-1021



BE "A FRIEND" BY JOINING THE FRIENDS OF PONTOOSUC LAKE!

Are you (please check):

A New Member _____
Renewing for '06 _____

INDIVIDUAL FRIEND	_____ \$5.00	BIG FISH	_____ \$50.00
FAMILY OF FRIENDS	_____ \$10.00	REALLY BIG FISH	_____ \$75.00
BEST FRIEND	_____ \$25.00	WORLD RECORD FISH!	_____ \$100.00

NAME _____ HOME PHONE _____ WORK PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

LAKE ADDRESS _____ EMAIL _____

AREA OF INTEREST, OR EXPERTISE _____

✂✂✂ ✂ Cut off and return with your check payable to The Friends of Pontoosuc Lake, c/o Ron Tinkham, 59 Sunrise St, Rt. 44, Pittsfield, 01201 ✂✂✂ ✂